

Word of the Day: Fish

Animal classification is when we group together animals that share similar traits into different categories. Classification helps scientists understand how different animals are related to each other. It is important for veterinarians to know the specific characteristics that define different groups of animals.

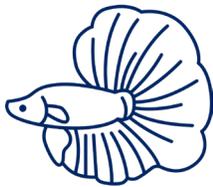
Many of the animals we see are called **vertebrates** because they have a backbone. Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish are all vertebrates!

Fish are cold-blooded animals that live in water and have fins and gills. Goldfish, salmon, and sharks are all fish!

Discussion Question

- What is your favorite fish?

Examples of Fish



Betta Fish



Goldfish



Koi Fish



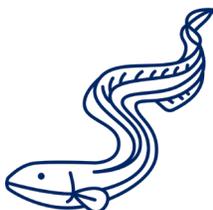
Tuna



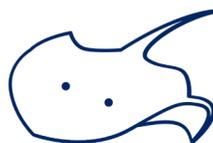
Salmon



Seahorse



Eel



Stingray



Shark

Children's Resources: Fish

Fish Characteristics

How can you tell if an animal is a fish?



Fins

Just like people use their legs to walk, fish use their fins to help them swim through the water. Fins also prevent fish from losing their balance and rolling over.

Cold-Blooded

Fish are cold-blooded, which means they cannot generate their own body heat. Cold-blooded animals must use their environment to warm or cool their bodies.



Gills

Fish use gills to breathe underwater, just like people use their nose and lungs to breathe air. Gills are found on a fish's side behind the head.

Scales

Many fish are covered in scales. These scales are covered in mucus, which makes fish feel slippery and lets them swim more easily in the water.



The Importance of Color

Fish come in all sorts of different colors and patterns! Below are a few of the reasons why colors are important for fish survival:



Camouflage

Some fish have colors and body shapes that help them to camouflage, or blend in, with their environment. This flatfish in the picture above is blending in with the sand. Some fish can even disguise themselves as rocks or coral.



Countershading

Sharks are dark on top and light on the bottom. This effect is called countershading and makes it hard to see the shark from above or below. Other types of animals, such as penguins and killer whales, also have countershading.



Warning Colors

Some fish have bright and flashy colors that warn predators not to eat them. The lionfish above has colorful spines with venom that can be painful and deadly.



Advertising Colors

Some fish use their bright colors to communicate with other fish. Some use their colors to attract a mate, while others use them to find fish of the same species.



Disruptive Colors

Some fish have irregular patterns meant to confuse other fish about the shape of its body. The butterfly fish above has a dark spot by its tail meant to look like an eye, which confuses potential predators.



Bioluminescence

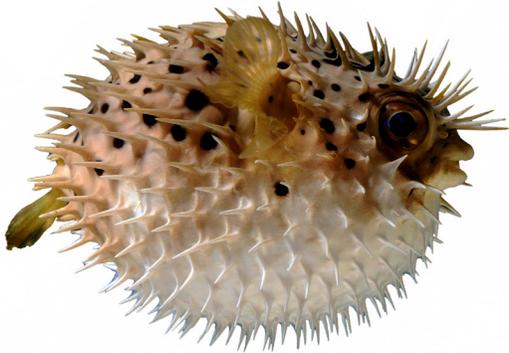
Some fish, especially those living deep underwater, have the ability to produce light. This is called bioluminescence and can be used to attract prey or attract a mate.

Fish Adaptations

Many fish have adaptations they use to hunt for food and/or protect themselves. Here are a few unique adaptations below:

Spikes

Pufferfish have sharp spikes they use to protect themselves.



Venom

Stingrays have a spine that injects venom into potential predators.



Electricity

Electric eels use electric shocks to stun prey.



Armor

Seahorses have armor plates along their tails to protect themselves.



Activities



PreK - Kindergarten

Fish Dress-Up

Materials: mermaid tails, shark fin headband or back piece, fish fin wristbands, face paint

- Dressing up is a fun way to learn more about animals! Your child can explore different fish characteristics through costume play.
- Gather different mammal costume items, such as mermaid costume tails, shark fin headbands/back pieces, or fish fin wristbands. If you have face paint at home, you can draw on colorful scales or gills!

Fishing at Home

Materials: felt, scissors, magnets, small washers, hot glue, stick, string, (optional) googly eyes, fabric paint

- Practice fishing at home with this fun **DIY Magnetic Fish Game!**
- Cut out two fish shapes from felt and glue a metal washer in between the pieces. Decorate with googly eyes and/or fabric paint and let them dry. Make as many as you want!
- Glue one end of a piece of string between two craft magnets and tie the other end to a stick to create your fishing rod.
- Lay out the felt fish and use your rod to go fishing right at home!

Underwater Sensory Bin

Materials: plastic bin, water, blue food coloring, sand, fish bath toys

- Create a sensory bin for your little one to explore fish habitats!
- Fill a plastic bin with sand and water. Use a few drops of blue food coloring to help the water resemble an ocean or a lake.
- Place fish bath toys in the bin and let your child explore!

Activities



All Ages

Fish Scale Art

Materials: stamps, construction paper, scissors, glue, googly eyes, coloring tools

- Fish have scales in all sorts of beautiful colors and patterns! Have your child create their very own colorful fish using common craft materials.
- You or your child can draw a fish on a piece of paper to fill out with colorful scales. For younger children, round stamps are an easy way to give the fish scales. For older children, they can cut out and decorate scales individually from construction paper and glue them into different patterns on their fish.

Live Fish Cams

Materials: wifi, computer or tablet

- There are lots of fun animal cams that kids of all ages can tune into!
- The Monterey Bay Aquarium has several different live cams. Check out their Kelp Forest Cam, Open Sea Cam, or Shark Cam to catch a glimpse of all sorts of different fish!
- Visit the following link to explore:
<https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams>